1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

631 ones. This situation was reported by Magyar, when he wrote,
635 'Quibanda (should be Civanda) to the east has 500 villages. The Chief has great power. He sends tribute every year to the king of Bailundu but is himself fully independent.'[1] Magyar described about 15 *otumbu* or '*ovikundscho*',[2] as he called them, of Bailundu.
(161) He estimated the population of Bailundu at 450,000, and for all the kingdoms of the Ovimbundu 1,200,000,[3] figures which are
(175) probably not very different from present-day facts. The report and description of the 'Capitania de Benguella' in 1799 said that the king of Bailundu dominated 2,056 villages; the king of Viye, 886; and the king of Ngalangi, 900; and listed their 'feudos' respectively as 82, 54, and 78.[4] My list of the Ngalangi *otumbu* shows 112. In Bailundu about 20 *otumbu* were ruled by members of the royal family, including heirs apparent or expectant, and the queen (*Inakulu*), who also had her own establishment.[5] About 20 were ruled by other court officials.

621 Most of these *otumbu* are still recognized as such or as *olombala*.[6]
622 Their decay has not been as great as that of the *ombala*[6] of their
177 liege lord, for they still fulfil certain functions in native life. They have also been given new functions by the administrative authorities.
• [651] The minor chiefs as well as village headmen are all required to assist in assessing and collecting the native tax, and also in recruiting labour for government works and for contracts. In some areas they receive in return the remission of their own taxes. In some areas they are required to wear uniforms. On the dancing floors
[693] of most of these minor *olombala* courts are still held, justice determined, and (to a limited extent) fines 'eaten'. Such judgements are not officially recognized or allowed by the European authorities. The African, however, often finds that European courts do not meet his needs or accord with his concepts of justice.

[1] Magyar, op. cit., p. 389.
[2] Umbundu *ovikanjo* (plural), 'branches', a term which through commercial or European influence is applied to the *otumbu*.
[3] For these figures and for descriptions of the several kingdoms, see Magyar, op. cit., chap. ix.
[4] *Annaes Mar. e Col.*, 4a Ser., pp. 155 ff.
[5] Magyar, op. cit., p. 390.
[6] *Olombala*, plural of *ombala*, a capital village or chief's residence.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

geographic position in the centre of the colony has also made it harder for them to evade it. Nevertheless, many have emigrated. In 1941 and again in 1944, when the writer visited South Africa, he found thousands of Ovimbundu on the Rand and many more in the Rhodesias and the Congo. Many are also known to have gone to the South-West Territory and to Bechuanaland, and some even to such distant points as Natal's north coast and French Equatorial Africa.[1]

Recent Developments

Currency, in the sense of money, is quite a recent introduction to the Ovimbundu. To the end of their trading activities, cloth ('trade goods') was the standard of exchange. Although dependence upon world markets caused prices to fluctuate with the course of the rubber trade, as we have seen, there was not, however, the great range which follows the fluctuations of the money market through a course of inflation and deflation. The Ovimbundu had had some dealings in money before the time of World War I, when there was a silver coinage, so that the depreciation which set in about 1921 was all the more confusing to them. This is not the place to discuss the finances and banking of Angola, but it must be noted that the conversion of the 'Escudo' into the 'Angolar' in 1928 at the rate of Ag. 0,80 to Esc. 1$00 greatly increased the sense of confusion among the natives. This was only to be expected when the native tax remained at Ag. 80,00 where it was Esc. 80,00 before, whereas daily wages to contract labourers became Ag. 0,80 where before they were Esc. 1$00. The confusion was considerable.[2]

Taxes began to be levied soon after military occupation, but for some years they were very small, especially in relation to opportunities for earning. When the head-tax reached Esc. 80,00 it remained at that figure for some years. In 1935 a 'work tax' and

[1] This state of affairs is frequently and quite freely commented upon in the Angola papers. For a recent notice see local correspondence entitled 'Noticias do Cuma' in the *Voz do Planalto* (Nova Lisboa) for 17 Aug. 1946. One of the most serious recent indictments is contained in an article in *O Farolim*, Luanda, 5 Nov. 1945, by Pedro J. Alves Correia. This distinguished writer asserts that the present labour policy is 'killing the goose which lays the golden egg'.

[2] For finance, currency, banking, and economic conditions in general, see Department of Overseas Trade, *Economic Conditions in Angola*, H.M.S.O., 1929. There are also reports for 1923 and 1925, but the one for 1929 covers the previous decade.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FF13 Mbundu FF13

another small amount were added, so that it is now Ag. 91,00.[1] This is not high in comparison with the figures for the Union of South Africa and some other African territories, but opportunities for earning in Angola are small. Wages and prices of produce are low indeed. These problems of labour and of taxation are much the same in many South and Central African territories. Their present-day poverty bears very hardly upon the Ovimbundu who saw much more prosperous times in the days of their large-scale trading.

Land. The ownership and occupation of land by natives does not present the acute problem in Angola which it does in several African territories. Natives have not been herded on to reserves, for rigid segregation is not the Portuguese idea, nor has there yet been occupation of land by European settlers on a scale sufficient to encroach upon the land needed by natives, save in a few localities. A large proportion of the concessions provisionally taken out by Europeans in 1919–25 have reverted to the State for failure to meet requirements, as, for example, to bring a stated proportion under cultivation. Many schemes for European colonization in the Benguela Highland have been projected from time to time. The Portuguese law protects the native in his holdings, but since European settlers often find ways to circumvent the intent of the law, and since an increasing European colonization is apt to be a threat to native holdings, a simplification of the machinery whereby the natives may secure sure title to communal or to individual holdings is highly desirable.[2]

Whatever else may be said, however, it is good to be able to report that at the present time the Ovimbundu have their land. This fact has been a very important factor in their transition from

[1] About $4.00 at present exchange. In 1937 the economic year was changed to the calendar year, and in most districts payment of an extra half-year's tax was required. About 1941 the tax was again raised, to Ag. 108,00, and in 1943 it was again put up, to 120,00. These figures are for most of the districts inhabited by the Ovimbundu. In some areas, especially frontier areas, the amounts levied are considerably lower.

[2] For the present official status of the questions of administration, land, labour, &c., see Comte J. de Penha-Garcia, *Organisation politique et administrative de l'empire colonial portugais*, Inst. Col. Int'n'l (1936); ibid. (ed.), *Les Colonies portugaises* (1931); a useful summary of the same will be found in Lord Hailey, *An African Survey* (London: 1938), pp. 213–16, 796 f. There is a discussion of these problems in J. T. Tucker, *Angola, Land of the Blacksmith Prince* (1933), chap. 8. See also Valdez dos Santos, *Angola, Coroação do Império* (Lisboa: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1945).

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advancement, will go to the head of their olcine to ask for his intercession with the spirits.[1]

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As legal head of the village, the ombala yimbo presides over both the more serious cases, which are held before the whole village on the dance-floor, and the simpler ones, which require the attendance only of those concerned, together with their respective elders, and may be taken up either in the onjango or in the headman's own courtyard. Bumbly seems to suggest that all the section-heads act with the village headman as a kind of council, but does not give details. He states also that the olosokulo (sing. osokulo) of the village formerly had charge of trials for murder, theft, adultery, and arguments over land,[2] and points out that they were more active in the legal system than the chiefs.[3] This is even more true today, when the village court of justice continues to function in spite of political and administrative changes, although the offices of chiefs and to some extent of sub-chiefs have largely decayed.

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Other functions of the village headman include: the distribution of land to the various families when new village sites are opened,[4] the direction of the communal fire-hunts;[5] and, today, the collecting of taxes from the villagers and the direction and organisation of labour to work on the roads.[6] But however numerous the headman's official duties, he usually finds some time to attend to his own affairs, whether he is a farmer, hunter, or trader.[7]

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Succession to headmanship is usually from father to son or from elder to younger brother, "with only as much recognition of primogeniture as belongs to the general ... hierarchy of age."[8] Succession is, however, affected by the "democratic" tendencies in succession to chieftainship.[9]

The Chief (ocema or ovo)[10]

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The Ovimbundu are grouped in 22 chiefdoms, of which half were in the past generally tributary to the more powerful chiefs.[11] At the same time each chiefdom had its separate government and could be considered as a unit in itself. Effective European occupation and direct rule have morphised the chiefly office among the Ovimbundu, until today chiefs survive as little more than "living museum pieces".[12] Childs[13] enumerates the functions of the chiefly office as follows:

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(a) *Religious.* The chief's ancestral spirits were the principal chiefdom deities, and the king was high-priest as well as the visible "viceregent and incarnation" of the spirits.

(1) Childs, personal communication.
(2) The maternal uncle is responsible for settling disputes over property which never exhibit the clocine. (Bumbly op.cit., p.200).
(3) Ibid. (4) Ibid.
(5) Cardoso, op.cit., p.128. (6) Ibid., p.121.
(7) Childs, op.cit., p.36. (8) Ibid., p.44.
(9) Ibid.
(10) Ocema means chief or king. Ovo is the personalised form used with the name. This the Portuguese writers have corrupted into ovos or rebs. (Childs, personal communication)
(11) See above, p.2.
(12) Childs, op.cit., p.36. (13) Ibid.

lives of chiefs.[1]

The chief's council and court

It has been noted that there is a chiefdom council responsible for electing the chief or deposing him, and for sitting with him in law cases. The composition of this council has not been clearly described.[2]

The sub-chief

The chiefdom[3] was made up of a number of sub-chiefdoms called ocumbo (sing. ocumbu). Bailundo had about 200 ocumbo, each of which had from 3 to more than 300 villages, while a number of the larger ocumbo were themselves made up of smaller ones. About 20 ocumbo were ruled by members of the chiefly family, including heirs apparent or expectant, and the chief's wife (ombolo) had also her own sub-chiefdom.[4] Others were ruled by court officials not of royal birth, who sometimes themselves established dynasties, others again by dynasties native to the respective regions, or at least dynasties longer resident in the area than the chiefly family. Villages of sub-chiefs, like those of chiefs, are known as olombolo. Most of the ocumbo are still recognised, and the sub-chiefs have retained more of their old functions than have the chiefs, and have in addition been given new functions. They as well as village headmen are required to assist in assessing and collecting native tax,[5] and also in recruiting labour for government work and for contracts. In some areas they receive in return the remission of their own taxes. On the dancing floor of most of their olombolo cases are still heard, judgments given and fines received, although such judgments are not officially recognised or allowed by the European authorities.[6]

LAW

Courts

Very little information is available. We are told that certain disputes, e.g. concerning inheritance, are settled within the olonjo;[7] that in the village cases are tried by a council which apparently consists of the section-heads under the leadership of the village headman;[8] and that these village courts continue to function; that certain cases (unspecified) are still unofficially heard in the courts of the sub-chiefs; and that prior to European occupation the paramount chief's decision was final.

(1) Ibid., p.28. But chiefs were treated with respect: Hambly (1934, p.214) notes that the ancient custom was for commoners to fall on their knees when greeting a chief, and today this still applies to women and children although less often is men. (2) See Serpa Pinto, 1881, p.367.

(3) Most writers use "kingdom" and "king", "chief" when used here without qualification refers always to the paramount chief of one of the 22 chiefdoms.

(4) Wagner, 1951, pp.389f, also quoted by Childs, op.cit., p.24.

(5) The amount of the tax levied on all males from 16 years is now Aga. 200,000 annually. As noted by Childs (p.215-6), it has been steadily increasing. Opportunities for earning are comparatively small in Angola, not any fault of ours, but because of "contract labour" required of all males in addition to taxes. Payment for "contract labour" is considerably below current wages, and it is a great hindrance to productive agricultural activities. (Childs, personal communication) (6) Childs, op.cit., pp.24-5.

(7) Hambly, (2) 1934, p.200. (8) See above, p.29.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

226 962 spear eight feet long, the end of which consisted of ten sharp prongs of palm stem (Plate LXXIII, Fig. 1).

[171] Near Cangamba in eastern Angola, fishing in the Kwando River occupied numerous men and women of the mixed tribes in the district, namely, Vachokue, Luchazi, and Babunda. Men paddled into midstream in small bark canoes from which fishing operations were directed. The fishermen carried small conical string nets, which were attached to stakes in such a way that the openings of the nets faced upstream. Vachokue women, working in pairs, dragged baskets against the current (Plate LXXXV, Figs. 1, 2).

AGRICULTURE AND COOKING

343 243 *Osila* is the Umbundu word for the granary which stands on wooden supports (Plate XLIV, Fig. 1); this *osila* is for the restricted family, and there is one *osila* for every house. The Ovimbundu store their corn in bulk, but in the Esele country I noted that the cobs themselves were carefully packed. Each Ocimbundu girl cultivates a small patch of ground, the produce of which she is at liberty to sell in order to buy brass ornaments, beads, and palm oil.

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241 In addition to maize, barley, oats, and wheat, with here and there a little rye, are occasionally grown. There are three colors of beans, red, white, and black. There is no attempt to keep the varieties separate, so they cross-fertilize freely. The Ovimbundu try to cultivate a surplus of beans and maize which they use to pay their taxes to the Portuguese, likewise to sell at the stores of traders.

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252 512 Corn is pounded on the rock which has been used for generations after it has been consecrated by sprinkling the blood of a chicken. Pounding begins as early as five o'clock in the morning, before sunrise, and from that time to sunset the pounding-rock is in use. The rock is evidently regarded as a meeting place for social intercourse; it is undoubtedly the center of village gossip so far as the women are concerned (Plate XXXVI, Fig. 2).

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As corn alone is considered a poor food, it is sprinkled on boiling water to which beans are added. Cooking goes on from early morning to sunset over a slow fire. Children sometimes receive as their evening meal a thick plastic cake of mushed corn to which green leaves of a squash are added.

252 There are five kinds of manioc resembling one another in general appearance, but the Ovimbundu distinguish the plants, and reserve for each what they consider to be appropriate preparation. The method varies for sweet and bitter varieties of manioc.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

undu, and Ngalangi are said to have had conflicts. In time past, as at the present day, a king reigned over territory which was extensive but definitely delimited for purposes of administration. Encroachment of one king on the rights of taxation and administration of another led to raids and reprisals. Village chiefs collected taxes in the form of agricultural produce and gave these to the king, who personally visited a village from which payments had not been made. A folklore story begins, "The people had not paid taxes so the king came to the village and told them a parable."

A king, if young, accompanied his people on the warpath. There was, however, a permanent leader named *kesongo*, a derivative from *songola* ("to lead"). The declaration of war, likewise the tactics, were discussed by a council of *olosekulu* ("village chiefs") in the *ombala* ("capital") where the king had, and still has, a royal compound. If war had been conducted among sections of the Ovimbundu, the defeated people had to pay taxes and tribute; moreover, their women and cattle were taken. In event of a successful war against the Vachokue there was plundering of cattle and women, but it was not found practicable to exact periodical payments from the enemy.

The subject of warfare is intimately related to that of slavery. There was until very recent times a domestic slavery which followed from the inability of a person to pay his debts. In connection with this reduction of free persons to a condition of slavery there are several points of exceptional interest. The debtor himself is not taken as a slave, neither are his wife or children. The correct procedure is a sale of his sister's children; but more frequently the children themselves are taken by the creditor. "The debtor's sister will say nothing because this is the law of the Ovimbundu." If payment of the debt is made later, the children are set free. Usually the word pawning is used by ethnologists to describe this proceeding.

Further consideration of Ngonga's payment to his mother's brother clarifies the facts of domestic slavery. "I paid for them, I took their place," said my interpreter. The payment for the return of these two children was two oxen. The girl, who was ten years of age when she was taken to pay the debt, was returned to her people when she was a woman with three children. Ngonga's brother was not actually taken from his home. He was made to pay his mother's brother's debt by working for the creditor. In general, these domestic slaves were not ill treated, though their rights were limited. The position of slaves taken from a hostile

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

5// pairs of shorts cost 70 escudos each. Two kerchiefs for women cost 50 escudos each.

Total income recorded is 2,870 escudos (£35. 17. 6). Total expenditure recorded is 2,255 escudos (£28. 3. 9). It should be noted that Kambungo, while not living in Portuguese style, was considered wealthy for an Otjimbundu and that much of his income, for instance from the sale of the ten sheep, was from exceptional sales which could not be annually repeated. As regards livestock Kambungo had five head of cattle, five chickens, four sheep and two ducks.

More typical would be the year's expenditure of Pedro Musungu, an inhabitant of a Protestant village, who had bought two cloths, each of four metres and each costing 50 escudos (about 12s 6d.) for his wife, and for each of his four children two cloths, one 25 escudos the other 30. He had bought a hoe for 7½ escudos, a book for the same. To this total expenditure should be added the tax (180 escudos) plus the communal [285] fines levied each year for burning the grass and so on which may come to 40 escudos or more. The total expenditure then would be about 555 escudos (£6. 18. 9). It was not possible to calculate his income since he could not remember how many sacks he had sold to the traders. He had, however, raised 200 escudos by selling a pig and had got 40 escudos for two kilos of coffee, though most of the coffee he planted had not produced berries.

A yet poorer household was that of Cypriano, a villager of Epalanga with a wife and two young children. His maize crop in 1956 had gone to pay debts to traders, for the 1955 maize harvest had been very poor. He had got tax-money by making pounding-blocks, and pounding-sticks (for beating out maize), but could not remember how much he had earned thus. Although Cypriano's stock amounted to one sow and one hen, [292] he and his wife had a set of smart clothes for special occasions, like all Ovimbundu.

Much better off was Luveli, who like Cypriano combined a craft with agriculture. He had sold ten kilos of coffee for 20 escudos each, as well as twelve sacks of maize at 25 escudos each and two sacks of potatoes at 20 escudos each, making a total agricultural revenue of 540 escudos, to which must be added